RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 4th September, 1595/13 th Bhadra, 1312 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY (Uttar Pradesh): Since the Prime Minister is here, would he like to say something on Bofors?

श्री अरविंद गणेश कुलकर्णी : बोफोर्स फोबिया हो गाथा है ।

श्री सुब्रह्मण्यम स्वामी : आप भूल गये होंगे । मुझे याद रखना पड़ता है ।

Fire Incidents in Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur

*361. PROF. SOURENDRA BHATTACHARJEE; Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a fire incident during the last year in Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur has resulted in a loss of about Bs. 40 lakhs;

(b) whether a number of fire i-'icidents had occurred during the past five years in the same depot which caused huge losses hut yet no responsibility was fixed;

(c) whether it is also a fact that ' the CBI had earlier enquired into the fire accidents of 1986 and had found very senior officials guilty of negligence etc.; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (DR. RAJA RAMANNA); (a) A fire incident took place at the Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur, on April 23, 1990. A Staff Court of Inquiry is in progress. The exact loss from the accident would be known after the report of the Inquiry is available. The tentative estimates suggest a loss of Rs. 35-40 lakhs.

(b) to (d) There has been only one other fire incident, on 28/29 May, 1986, in this Depot during the past five years, resulting in a loss of Rs. 1. 72 crores. This incident had been investigated by the CBI as well as by a Staff Court of Inquiry. Based on their findings six officers, who were found guilty of negligence, were punished. The officers included the Depot Commandant (a Brigadier), a Lt. Colonel, a Major, a JCO and two Civilians.

PROF. ISOURENDRA BHATTACHARJEE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the reply of the Minister really confirms everything that is asked for. Regarding the latest fire, he says that an inquiry is proceeding and a preliminary estimate puts the loss at between Rs. 35 and 40 lakhs. Earlier was a much more comprehensive affair that happened in 1986, inquired into by the CBI and six officers were punished. Now I would request the Minister kindly to tell whether the inquiry revealed any negligence on the part of the administration there and, if so, what actions have been taken to remove those deficiencies.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA; Mr. Chairman, Sir, the 1986 fire was thoroughly enquired into, and the results of the investigation are quite clear.

But regarding the one just a few months ago the enquiry court Is still sitting, and we do not have complete results of the enquiry.

The finding of the enquiry of 1986 was that no sabotage or mischief was likely. Even here it is not likely that any type of sabotage took place, but it was just a fire accident mainly because the material that was burnt was esentially saddles and hostelries dealing with horses.

PROF. SOURENDRA BH ATTACH ARJEE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the question concerns the Ordnance Depot. My knowledge, regarding horses and saddles is very limited. Occasionally I might have seen them. I do not know what the direct experience of the Minister himself is. But the question is, he is saying that in all probably n_0 sabotage was involved. Ordnance factories' importance in defence cannot be overemphasised or cannot be gainsaid. In such a matter, such conjectural reply on the part of the Minister i_9 a bit disappointing, I should say.

MR. CHAIRMAN; Put your question also.

PROF. SOURENDRA BHATTA-CHARJEE:. r am specificially mentioning about the quality of his reply. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put your question. (Interruptions)

PROF. SOURENDRA BHATTA-CHARJEE: My question is, number one, whether the Minister would consider examining in depth the preventive measures for frustrating any attempt at ' sabotage. Number two, would he place before the House the report of the CBI regarding the fire in 1986 because it seems that there are. many things which are not above suspicion. The entire report should be placed on the Table of the House. Would he consider it? His summary may not give the full picture of the same. Rather, the contrary may be the erase.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA; Mr. Chairman, Sir, the way we have looked at this problem is from the actual report of the * enquiry committee and the CBI. We cannot do more than that because they are fairly well-qualified people, those -who have examined the circumstances under which this fire took place. • But certainly -security, fire prevention, fire-fighting arrangements have been ■ strengthened. Steps have been taken to ensure strict compliance with the laid-down instructions and procedures. This is being done again and again because we would like to avoid fires of this type, to try to modernise it and to make sure that such fires do not occur. Whether it was a sabotage or not, we just have to go by what the enquiry report tells us, and it is not likely that anybody would do sabotage, because of the typ; of equipment that was lost.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Sir, in the ordnance factories private contractors are given some piecework. Private contractors are also given some work in the factory also. They, hire. labourers. for sweeping and Other purposes like that; All these things will result in some kind of an atmosphere where some elements may enter the factories. That is why, private persons should not be allowed to enter ordnance factories.

MR. CHAIRMAN; So, your question is whether the Government will think of doing away with private] eople.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Private people and private eontracts in ordnance factories. Entry of private persons into the ordnance fac-lories must be prohibited. Whrt the position is, the Minister may tell us.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: The fact remains that certain operations require contractors and the private labour like in buildings. Because we cannot set up enormous systems to deal with such problems, we would like to go out. But I will assure the hon. Member that security checks are constantly made on all the private contractors and their labourers, when they work on such confidential systems.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Sir, " my question i_s that piece-works pre being given'to the private people.

Not only construction works, but even routine works are also given to the private contractors.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA; I don't t. 'iink there is anything wrong in giv- x ing these to the private contractors, if the work can be done fast and cheaply as long as security *is* pra- ' parly looked after.

National River Authority to clean UP river waters

*362. DR. NARREDDY THULASI REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are con templating any proposal to constitute a National River Authority to clean up river water all over the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

fc) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NILAMANI ROUTRAY): (a) A concept paper. for a National *[* River Action Plan has been prepared. -...

(b) The Plan broadly outlines the A'arious components such as scope, functions, organisational framework, modalities of implementation, etc.

(c) Does not arise,

i

, DR. NARREDDY THULASI RED DY; The water in mogt of the Indian divers is contaminated. It is not suitable for drinking purposes. The »flora and fauna, especially fish, are decreasing gradually. The main rea son for this is the industrial effluent released into the rivers. So, I would vlike to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is prepared I to close the industries on the river banks which release pollutant efflu ents and disagree to the setting up of effluent treatment plants. •.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI; Sir, again Mrs. Maneka Gandhi is miss- > ing. Continuously she is not here during the Question Hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Cabinet Mi nister is here. (Interruptions) This is not important. Let us proceed with the work.

डा० रत्नाकर पाण्डेय : स्टेट मिनिस्टर पर्सनल एक्सप्लेनेशन देने के लिए हाउस में आती हैं. . . **(व्यवधान)**

श्री सभापति : आप तो अपना जवाब दीजिए । . . . (व्यवधान)

SHRI NILAMANI ROUTRAY-There is no doubt that these industries...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATAKA-JAN; Let the Prime Minister tel-us—. (Interruptions)

SHRI NILAMANI ROUTRAY: There is no doubt that these iridust-ries are polluting..

डा० रत्नाकर पाण्डेय : मंत्री महोदया क्यों नहीं आतीं प्रधान मंत्री जी बताइये . . . **(व्यवधान)**

श्री सभापति : आप तो अपना जवाब दीजिए . . . **(व्यवधान)**

डा० रत्नाकर पाण्डेय : केवल स्पष्टीकरण देने के लिए आती हैं। . . . **(व्यवधान)**

श्री सभापति : आप सब बहुत ही सीनियर मेम्बर हैं और आप जानते हैं कि दोनों का आना जरूरी नहीं होता हैं। कभी भी जरूरी होता है। अब कबिनेट मिनिस्टर मौजूद हैं, किस्सा खत्म हो गया।

श्री सुरेन्द्रजीत सिंह अहलुवालिया : सभापति महोदय, कुछ दिनों से अखबारों में छप रहा था कि एनवायरनमेंट मिदिस्ट्री के कुछ विभाग मेनका गांधी को दिए हैं और कुछ विभाग कैबिनेट मिनिस्टर के पास हैं और उनकी . . . **(व्यवधान)**

श्री सभापति : ओवरआल जिम्मेदारी कैबिनेट मिनिस्टर की होती है और केबिनेट मिनिस्टर जवाब दे रहे हैं । . . . **(व्यवधान)**